



(From left, clockwise) BNP Chairman Tarique Rahman addresses a rally in the ECB Chatter area of capital's Cantonment Thana; Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Shafiqur Rahman presents the Shapla Koli (water lily bud), the electoral symbol of the National Citizen Party, to NCP Convener Nahid Islam, the 11-party alliance candidate for Dhaka-11, at a rally at the DIT Project playground in Merul Badda; and Islami Andolan Bangladesh's Senior Nayeb-e-Ameer Mufti Syed Muhammad Faizul Karim, the party's candidate for Barishal-5, speaks at a campaign rally in front of the Central Shaheed Minar in Barishal city. Photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MEHEDI HASAN, TITU DAS, BNP MEDIA CELL

## Voting a matter of afterlife too

### Says IAB chief in televised address to nation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Islami Andolan Bangladesh (IAB) Ameer Mufti Syed Muhammad Rezaul Karim, widely known as the Charmonai Pir, urged people to vote for honest and competent candidates, saying that voting concerns not only this life but the afterlife as well.

"Even without engaging in corruption, criminal activities or money laundering, the sin of corruption and crime could be added to your Amolnama (record of deeds) simply for voting in the wrong place," said the IAB chief in his address to the nation, aired on BTB yesterday evening as part of the Election Commission's initiative to broadcast speeches by party chiefs ahead of the 13th parliamentary election.

During his 22-minute speech, Mufti Rezaul said the party vowed to uphold Islam as the fundamental principle of governance, which, he said, has been practised by the people of this land in their faith and way of life for a thousand years.

"If Islam is implemented as the guiding principle of state governance, Bangladesh will, In Sha Allah, attain the prosperity and goals it aspires to achieve."

He added that such principles in state governance include justice, fairness, sensitivity to citizens' interests, accountability, social security, the rule of law, and ensuring the right of people of all religions to

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## NCP vows country free of inequality and corruption

### Nahid urges votes for 11-party alliance in televised address

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Citizen Party Convener Nahid Islam yesterday vowed to build a Bangladesh free from structural inequality, systemic corruption, and foreign dominance, singling out India's influence over the country's politics and economy.

In a televised address on Bangladesh Television ahead of the February 12 elections, he unveiled a 17-point manifesto focused on judicial reform, reclaiming national sovereignty, and dismantling "fascist-era" exploitation.

He framed the upcoming election as a decisive moment to reclaim the country from fascist forces and external pressure, emphasising a future grounded in justice and equality.

In a sharp assessment of the current political climate, the NCP chief said that while the fall of the "murderer Hasina" led to a government without political party leaders, [the state machinery remained vulnerable to exploitation].

He alleged that leaders and activists of a "predatory party" took control of the state apparatus, using it for extortion, occupation, false cases, and the "buying and

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## FEB 12 POLLS

### Nearly 10 lakh security agency members deployed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nearly 10 lakh security personnel from various agencies have been deployed across the country to maintain law and order ahead of the 13th national election and referendum on February 12.

The second phase of the nationwide security deployment began yesterday and will remain in force until February 14, covering the period before, during and after polling.

The personnel include members of the army, navy, air force, police, BGB, Rapid Rab, Ansar and VDP, coast guard and other auxiliary forces.

According to the Election Commission (EC), a total of 9,70,948 security personnel were to be engaged in election duty starting yesterday.

The contingent includes 1,00,003 army personnel, 5,000 navy personnel, 3,730 air force personnel, 37,453 BGB troops, 3,585 coast guard members, 1,87,603 police members, 9,349 Rab personnel, 5,76,483 Ansar and VDP members, 1,922 BNCC cadets and 45,820 chowkidar and dafadar.

In addition, 1,051 executive magistrates have been mobilised and will remain in the field until February 14 to oversee law and order and electoral compliance.

From guarding polling centres to operating mobile

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## 39 hurt in pre-polls violence in 2 dists

STAR REPORT

At least 39 people were injured in polls-related violence in Noakhali and Patuakhali yesterday. In Noakhali 2, a clash broke out between supporters of BNP candidate Zainul Abidin Farooque and independent contender Kazi Mofizur Rahman at Senbagh Bazar around 7:00pm, leaving at least 13 people injured, said police.

Mofizur, also a former member of the BNP's National Executive Committee, alleged that supporters of the BNP candidate attacked his vehicle. Denying the claim, Farooque said Mofizur's supporters vandalised his car.

In Patuakhali's Baulal, at least 26 people, including three women, were hurt in a clash between BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami activists.

Witnesses said a group of Jamaat's female activists was campaigning at Bhandaria Bazar around 12:30pm for their party's Patuakhali-2 nominee Shafiqur Islam Masud.

At that time, some BNP activists intercepted them, alleging that the female group was distributing money to buy votes.

Hearing of the incident, some Jamaat men rushed there, triggering altercation between the two groups. At one point, the groups were locked in a clash.

The injured were admitted to Baulal Upazila Health Complex. Three of them were women, said Abdur Rouf, upazila health and family planning officer.

One of them was sent to the Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College as his condition was critical, he added.

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## Tarique pledges real change

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let their sacrifices go in vain? The right to vote must be firmly established."

He said there had been no accountability for 16 years and that people's rights had been forcibly taken away. "In the future, we must ensure economic independence by establishing democracy," he added.

He reiterated the call on voters to remain alert at another rally at Sun Valley ground in Dhaka-11 constituency at 11:00pm.

"You must stay alert. In every area, in every neighborhood, you must keep an eye on things so that these covert forces cannot mislead the people. Will you be able to do that?"

At this, the crowd shouted, "Yes." "...We must stay vigilant to ensure that no one can enter [voting centres] with fake seals in their pockets."

"Go to the polling stations and vote according to the law of the country, but just voting and leaving won't be enough. You must understand the vote count and then return home."

"We have an opportunity on the 12th, and we should not let this opportunity slip away," he added.

**'NO UNREALISTIC PROMISES'** Throughout the day, Tarique campaigned in major parts of

northern Dhaka, placing a series of pledges to build a safer, livable city.

At a rally at Adarsha High School ground in Mirpur-10 in support of BNP's Dhaka-15 candidate Shafiqur Islam Khan Milton, Tarique said the party would not make unrealistic promises.

"BNP believes people are the true source of power. We do not want to make promises that go against public interest or cannot be fulfilled," he said, calling the February 12 election "an election for rebuilding the nation and changing people's lives."

Outlining key points of the party's manifesto, he said it focused on women, students, unemployed youth, healthcare and economic development.

On women's empowerment, he recalled free education for girls from class one to 12 during Khaleda Zia's tenure and reiterated the pledge for Family Cards for homemakers to ensure direct government support.

On employment, he said the BNP plans to establish vocational institutes in every area to provide language and technical skills, while low-interest loans would help young people work abroad without selling family land.

Speaking about farmers, he said

Farmers Cards would provide seeds and fertiliser directly, and farm loans of up to Tk 10,000 would be waived if BNP forms the government.

On healthcare, he said mobile health workers would serve villages, and a hospital would be built in Dhaka-15.

He also said work would resume on the long-delayed 100-foot-wide road project in Mirpur that began during Khaleda Zia's government.

Milton, the candidate for the constituency, later told The Daily Star that the project would connect Kachukhet with the Mirpur Government Bangla College area via 60-foot Road.

At another rally at Lal Math in Pallabi Ward-2, Tarique said attacking opponents would bring no benefits. "I can talk about our political opponents, but what benefit will that bring to the people?" he asked.

He said February 12 offers citizens a chance to form a people's government after years of struggle. Criticising the past 16 years, he said, "There were mega projects, but no mega change in people's lives. Instead, there was mega corruption."

Referring to the July uprising, he said about 1,400 people were killed and 20,000 injured. "Their blood

must not go in vain," he said.

He alleged that about \$16 billion was sent abroad every year during the previous government's tenure.

"No development plan can succeed unless we control corruption."

**PLEDGES FOR DHAKA**

At ECB Chatter in Dhaka-17, Tarique called himself a "son of the area" and sought votes for the party symbol "Sheaf of Paddy".

"If the BNP is elected, we will transform Dhaka into a safe city, In sha Allah, where mothers and sisters can walk without fear, and people can live and work safely," he said.

He promised to build at least 40 playgrounds across Dhaka city and pledged to widen the street from ECB Chatter to Jashimuddin Road in Uttara to improve mobility and livability.

At Shyamali Club Ground, during another campaign in support of Dhaka-13 candidate Bobby Hajaj, Tarique said canal encroachers would be evicted regardless of their political identity.

He said the occupation of canals disrupts movement and causes waterlogging, and resolving the problem would be a top priority if BNP comes to power.

allocated the seat to Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Bangladesh. However, expelled BNP leader Rummeen Farhana is contesting from the seat independently.

In Dhaka-12, the BNP left the seat for Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque. Former convener of the Dhaka North City BNP unit, Saiful Alam Nirab, was expelled and is contesting the polls.

In Patuakhali-3, BNP leader Hasan Mamun is contesting despite the party's decision to leave the seat for Gono Odhikar Parishad President Nurul Haque Nur.

## Rebels haunt BNP in four dozen seats

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In Cumilla-2, BNP nominee Selim Bhuiyan is locked in a tough race with expelled rebel Abdul Motin Khan, a former APS-2 to the late Khaleda Zia.

In Mymensingh-10, BNP candidate Akhtaruzzaman Bachchu is competing closely with Abu Bakar Siddiqur Rahman, with the contest expected to be a close one.

In Sunamganj-3, BNP nominee Kaisar Ahmed is contesting against independent candidate Anwar Hossain, a former district BNP vice-president. In Sunamganj-4, BNP candidate Nurul Islam is facing Dewan Zainul Zakerin, another

former district BNP vice-president.

Rebel candidates are in strong positions in several constituencies, including Narayanganj-2 and 3, Tangail-3 and 5, Munshiganj-1, Manikganj-1, Madaripur-1, Gopalganj-2, Rajbari-2, Kishoreganj-1, Dinajpur-2 and 5, Naogaon-1, 3 and 6, Pabna-3, Mymensingh-2, 6, 7 and 9, Chattogram-16, Khagrachhari, Noakhali-2, Chandpur-4, Brahmanbaria-5, Barishal-1, Narail-1, Jhenaidah-4, Satkhira-3, Jashore-5, Sylhet-5, Habiganj-1, Panchagarh-2 and Rangpur-3.

Despite repeated warnings, negotiations and expulsions, rebel

candidates remain in the race in more than five dozen constituencies.

Even after BNP Chairperson Tarique Rahman intervened and the party expelled over 200 grassroots leaders supporting rebel candidates, the measures have had little impact.

Earlier, BNP expelled 72 rebel candidates for defying party instructions to contest the polls, though around a dozen later withdrew.

Rebel candidates are also causing discomfort for BNP's allies, particularly in seats where the party has not fielded its own nominees.

In Brahmanbaria-2, the BNP

## No DP World deal

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starting 8:00am today until February 15, its coordinator Ibrahim Khokon told The Daily Star.

The decision was taken keeping in mind the national election and the release of Ramadan cargo and despite the punitive measures taken by the CPA against 16 employee-leaders yesterday, he said.

The CPA took steps, one after another, against the 15 protesting leaders, like harassment and arrests.

For instance, it issued an order to cancel the housing allotments of the 15 protesting employees who were earlier transferred to Mongla and Payra ports but did not join in disregard of the order.

In a video message yesterday morning, Parishad Coordinator Ibrahim said: "The port chairman has been using the police, army, coast guard, SB and DB since yesterday to harass our leaders and activists. Several protesters were arrested."

Abdur Rahim, the officer-in-charge of Bandar Police Station, confirmed that five CPA employees were detained while the filing of cases against them by the CPA was underway.

Parishad's indefinite strike to place their five-point demand, including cancellation of the move to lease NCT to DP World, dismissal of the port chairman and withdrawal of punitive actions against 16 protesting employees, severely disrupted the Chattogram port's operational activities.

Though the port authority took several attempts to resume different operations with the help of police and Army members inside the port yards, the situation did not improve much until evening.

Cargo and container handling at eight jetties at the port's oldest terminal GCB remained completely shut while loading and unloading at six jetties under CCT and NCT terminals, run by Bangladesh Navy's CDDL, went on in slow pace, said shipping agents.

Cargo delivery from almost 60

mother vessels at the port's outer anchorage remained suspended due to the strike, said Sarwar Sagar, chairman of the ship handling operators' association.

Cargo delivery from the port remained stopped.

No import or export containers could be transported between the port and 19 private ICDS, said Bangladesh Inland Container Depots Association officials.

As many as 17 vessels were moved to and from the port yesterday by CPA pilots without logistics support as protesters did not allow operations of enough tugboats and pilot boats.

In a press briefing yesterday afternoon, CPA Chairman M Moniruzzaman claimed that the activities at the port remain operational and warned that the law enforcement agencies would take action if anyone tries to disrupt activities.

"Though any deal is yet to be signed, a group of misguided employees has chosen this path [strike] through spreading misinformation and by holding the port and the people hostage."

He termed the movement as an ill attempt to sabotage the deal signing process in advance or at a premature stage.

## Conservative PM

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sovereignty," said Yuernyong Loonboot, 64, the first voter to cast his ballot at a polling station in Buriram, Anutin's hometown.

"Living here, the border conflict has made me anxious. War was never something we used to think about."

Soon after taking office, Anutin authorised the armed forces to take whatever action they saw fit on the border, without referring to the government first.

Thailand's military took control of some disputed areas in the latest fighting in December, and a ceasefire is now in place.